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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 001476

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [BA](#) [LE](#) [IS](#) [REGION](#) [POL](#) [BILAT](#)
SUBJECT: TFLE01: PARLIAMENTARIANS URGE U.S. INTERVENTION
TO STOP CONFLICT IN LEBANON

Classified By: CDA Susan L. Ziadeh for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) A four-member delegation representing the ad hoc parliamentary Committee to Support the People of Lebanon and Palestine called on the Charge August 6 to urge the United States to become more active in halting the conflict in Lebanon and to stop Israel from attacking civilians. Delegation leader Abdul Hadi Marhoon said a ceasefire would calm the situation and assist in finding a more permanent solution. Other delegation members said Israel's actions could indirectly encourage extremism and terrorism in the region and negatively impact the U.S.-Bahrain relationship. They also indicated that some people are complaining about the recently implemented U.S.-Bahrain free trade agreement because of their unhappiness with U.S. policy in the region. The Charge emphasized that the United States was active in working for a solution that implemented a durable ceasefire, no return to the status quo ante, and expansion of Lebanese government authority throughout the country. End Summary.

Stop the Fighting Now

¶2. (C) A delegation composed of Council of Representatives (COR) First Deputy Chair Abdul Hadi Marhoon and MPs Yusuf Zeinal, Abdul Nabi Salman, and Isa Abul Fatah called on the Charge August 6 to urge the U.S. to take a more active role in halting the conflict in Lebanon, in particular to stop Israel from attacking civilians. Saying the delegation represented the COR ad hoc Committee to Support the People of Lebanon and Palestine, Marhoon said parliamentarians are most concerned about innocent people being killed in Lebanon and Palestine. An early ceasefire would protect civilians and expedite finding a more permanent solution to the conflict. Marhoon cited the Palestinian situation as the root problem in the region, and asked rhetorically how Arabs can coexist with Israel while there is no solution to the Palestinian issue.

¶3. (C) Zeinal said that the Bahraini people come daily to members of parliament to vent their anger and frustration with the conflict. They complain that parliamentarians should be more vocal in expressing the views of the people. Zeinal stated that the delegation members clearly recognize the strategic relationship between the United States and Israel, but the U.S. should intervene because "what's happening is against international law and Western morals." He asked why the United States does not stop Israel from targeting civilians. By not reining in Israel or pursuing serious peace initiatives, the U.S. is indirectly encouraging

extremism and possibly terrorism in the region.

14. (C) Salman said that people view the U.S. as "the number one" supporter for Israel because it is sending bombs that Israel uses in Lebanon. "The U.S. is part of the war," he said. Building a new Middle East should not be at the expense of innocent people. Bahrainis feel that the United States is a good friend, but if the conflicts continue in Gaza and Lebanon, "we can't be as good friends with the U.S." as is currently the case.

U.S. Working Toward a Durable Ceasefire

15. (C) The Charge replied that the U.S. and Bahrain have historically strong relations that have endured over time and will continue. Regarding the current conflict, the U.S. opposes and condemns the loss of innocent life on all sides. She noted that the Secretary and senior U.S. officials were working closely with UN Security Council members and parties in the region to find a solution that would result in a lasting ceasefire and prevent a return to the status quo ante situation. A key factor is for the Lebanese government to expand its authority to all areas of the country, including the south. Salman responded that any durable ceasefire would require Israel to withdraw from Shebaa Farms. He suggested that the international community use the Lebanese government's seven-point plan, to which Hizballah has agreed, as the basis for a solution.

FTA Target of Some Complaints

16. (C) Turning to the impact of the conflict on the bilateral relationship, Marhoon said that Bahrainis "don't want to talk about the (recently implemented U.S.-Bahrain) FTA while Arabs are bleeding." Abul Fatah stated that at his private majles, he hears people say "the FTA can go to hell." Zeinal noted that some people wonder if the FTA is part of a conspiracy for Bahrain to normalize relations with Israel. (Note: Although we have heard some people complain about the FTA because of U.S. policy in the region, on the commercial side, by contrast, business people are eager to benefit from the agreement now that it has been implemented.)

17. (SBU) Separately, the Bahrain On-Line chatroom August 8 posted a letter from Marhoon to Hizballah Secretary General Nasrallah expressing his solidarity with Hizballah and congratulating the organization for its position in the face of Israeli aggression.

Comment

18. (C) The ad hoc committee representatives have visited several G-8 embassies to make the case for a more robust Western response to the Lebanon conflict. As Zeinal said, the group is certainly reflecting the anger of its constituents. But the press releases following each of the committee's meetings indicate another objective important to committee members: burnishing their Arab solidarity and foreign affairs credentials in the run-up to the fall parliamentary elections.

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